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ABSTRACT

In the context of the United Kingdom's further education (FE) system, continuous professional development (CPD) can be considered to include study for further qualifications and formal and informal in-college development programs. The tradition has been for teachers to determine their own development. In situations where resources to support development are scarce, however, it becomes more important to ensure that CPD responds to the needs of the organization. A systematic framework for CPD of FE teachers and managers is needed. It could consist of three stages as follows: (1) required updating in areas covered by initial qualifications where knowledge and practice moves on and required acquisition of skills and knowledge for those who have changed roles or assumed additional roles; (2) development routes for those who wish to continue developing their teaching role (by specializing or becoming "expert" teachers) and for those teachers who wish to develop as managers; and (3) required training or qualification of principals. Established qualifications, such as advanced certificates, diplomas, and CPD awards, can play an important part in CPD. Standards can inform the development of qualifications and set expectations with regard to designing CPD activities, constructing individual development plans, and assisting in informal learning. (MN)

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Issues in continuing professional development

towards a systematic framework

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Introduction

The second report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (1999) makes the point that lifelong learning is regarded by many as unnecessary, unappealing or unavailable. It recommends a concerted effort to instil a craving for learning in every adult and child. A crucial group in a position to help instil this craving are the staff working in FE colleges.

Staff in colleges are no strangers to the lifelong learning culture either as the facilitators of the learning of others, or as lifelong learners themselves. The recent report on professional development in further education by the FEFC (1999) highlights staff participation in events organised by examining bodies, professional organisations and a wide range of opportunities within colleges for the sharing of good practice, through working groups, staff meetings and class observation. Many teaching staff will also be pursuing individual qualifications either by taught programmes or research, within their own college or with their local HE institution. However, this development is taking place against the backdrop of declining levels of finance allocated to staff development and calls for more specific attention to be paid to training in pedagogic skills and good quality management training.

Whilst acknowledging much good practice, *Learning to succeed*, DfEE (1999), is specific in its criticisms of management and teaching in further education, stating that significant curricula and management weaknesses exist, and that there are providers where quality is not up to scratch. In the wake of recent announcements on failing colleges, the Government has called for a qualification for principals that will be a prerequisite for appointment, and for governor training on financial and other key responsibilities that should occur within six months of appointment. The White Paper also states the intention to require initial teacher training qualifications.

All of this places the continuous professional development (CPD) of governors, principals, managers and teachers centre stage in the drive to improve standards within the sector, ensure the best learning experience for students, and make colleges accountable to those who fund them and the learning communities that use them. This paper examines some of the issues surrounding CPD including its definition, the link between personal and organisational development, the encouragement of CPD, the development of a systematic framework for CPD in the sector, and the role of standards and qualifications.

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1. Defining CPD

Definitions of CPD vary, depending upon who is putting them forward. Professional bodies who operate CPD schemes for their members tend to define CPD in terms of an annual minimum quota of activity measured in hours, points or credits which may or may not include qualifications. Alternatively, they may define CPD in terms of a personal development plan, often involving participation in work-based projects. A recent DfEE Open Agenda Brainstorming Event (1999) on the theme of lifelong learning and CPD, suggested that CPD is essentially about 'employment related learning and life skills' and as such was the main element of lifelong learning that relates to any learning that is employment related. This broad definition of CPD is close to that proposed by Eraut *et al.* (1998) as 'all the further learning which contributes to how a qualified professional thinks and acts at work'. Such a definition can encompass formal CPD activity and academic awards, but also learning from other people and from the work itself.

If we accept this broad definition, then CPD in the college setting can be considered to include study for further qualifications, in-college development programmes of a formal or more informal nature such as mentoring, coaching, and networking, and learning from experience. Such a definition is helpful because of its inclusiveness: it can embrace all the further learning that is carried out by the different groups of staff who work in colleges. It also suggests a weakness that exists in the breadth of activity that counts as CPD. There are a plethora of qualifications available for those wishing to develop their skills and knowledge, and in-college development programmes are growing fast, particularly in the area of management development. Much learning from experience, however, could benefit from more structured reflection on the issues and problems faced by college staff. Opportunities for such reflection and discussion are limited in the 'hurly-burly' of everyday college life.

Perhaps a more sector-specific definition of CPD would be useful, one that attempts to distinguish CPD from what is often referred to as 'staff development' or 'staff training'. CPD can be characterised as follows: usually individually driven and organised, pursued over an extended period of time, usually standards-based or leading to a formal qualification, focused on promoting improvement or change in practice thereby leading to eventual impact on the quality of student learning, and adopting a broad approach rather than a 'narrow skills development approach' (Martinez, 1999).

2. Personal and organisational development

A distinction is often made between professional development that is determined by the individual and that which is determined by the needs of the college. It is the latter form of development which is the subject of most discussion today, although clearly both are important. The concept of the learning organisation stresses the importance of learning by individuals and the way in which this can accrue for the benefit of the organisation. In short, an organisation which is composed of individuals who are themselves constantly learning and reflecting on their learning, will be an organisation which is flexible and capable of adapting readily to its environment. Some companies have sought to promote individual learning through the allocation of funding which employees can use to purchase learning of any type. The point is not that the learning has to be relevant to the business of the organisation, but that individuals who are disposed towards learning and developing, in whatever situation or subject, are an asset to the company.

In a situation where resources to support development are rare, it becomes more important to ensure that CPD responds to the needs of the organisation. Classically, organisational needs are diagnosed through the strategic planning cycle. Annual operating plans are derived from the strategic plan, and the contribution of various departments or curriculum centres to achievement of the operating plan are specified. It is then possible to identify the contributions of individuals to the achievement of departmental plans and also to identify the development needs they may have in order to support their effective contribution. It is not always possible to see this system in operation in colleges. There has been a tradition of teachers determining their own development, with a particular emphasis upon subject development. CPD linked to the needs of the college has not taken precedence. Developments like Investors in People (IiP) have drawn attention to this shortcoming.

One of the main reasons for this lack of systematic linking of individual development to the needs of the college (as identified in its strategic plan) is the lack of effective models for evaluating the impact of development upon the individual's ability to do their job, and upon the effectiveness of the college itself. Whilst basic cost benefit models may be available, these are not sophisticated enough to link professional development activity directly to the performance of the college. In the absence of any proven link, it is difficult to argue that development related to the needs of the college should take precedence over those needs identified by individuals. A statement such as this contains an assumption that individuals undertake development activity that may be of little benefit to the college. This is unlikely to be true: as stated above, there is an argument that any kind of development can be beneficial because it is the process of learning that is more important than what is learnt. Putting this claim to one side, however, it is clear that the development activity that teachers and managers engage in, as identified by the FEFC (1999) and Martinez (1999), is highly relevant to their organisations.

The key issues here are scarcity and priority. Limited resources imply selectivity, and pressing needs to address specific requirements necessitate some activities taking precedence over others. Colleges need to become more effective at identifying their specific development needs and signalling these to their staff. Individuals will respond positively to the prioritising of some needs at certain times, in a culture where all development is valued.

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3. Encouragement of CPD

In a paper to the APC annual conference, Silver (1999) makes the case that the FE sector has been duped into believing that 'change, modernisation and futurisation of colleges can be brought about either by declared desire or decree'. She cites the way college managers were stewarded, almost by correspondence, into coping with incorporation, and how teachers are constantly asked to introduce new or changed products without 'due and diligent preparation'. In arguing for the sector to make clear to Government what it needs in order to deliver its new educational agenda, and suggesting that the sector asks for 'something for something' in return she states:

> *The something that we must ask for, from Government, in return for the many new things that we are involved in, is the replenishment of teachers in their expert roles and in their love of their subject.*

Silver summarises this task as breeding a new professionalism. Some of the key features of professionalism are formal initial training, a requirement to continue to develop, and an ethical code, which determines everyday practice. The building blocks for the creation of these requirements are beginning to be put in place. FENTO has produced standards for teaching and supporting learning, and standards for managers are currently under preparation. The DfEE is working on proposals for an initial teacher training requirement and for a qualification for principals. There have been broad discussions within the sector about the value of a professional body for FE staff. All of this serves to provide a positive climate for the encouragement of practitioners to engage in CPD activity, an encouragement which needs to be reinforced at the level of individual institutions, and assisted by the development of a systematic framework.

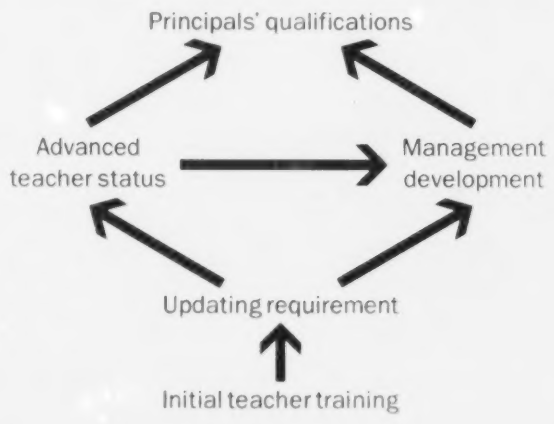
A systematic framework for CPD

The time is right for putting in place a systematic framework for the development of teachers and managers in further education. With attention currently being paid to the top and bottom of such a framework, that is the qualification for principals and initial teacher training qualifications, there is a clear need to address the gap in between. The framework needs to take into account such considerations as:

- The need for teachers to develop in their teaching role in addition to their subject or vocational knowledge and skill
- The desire of some teachers to stay working in the classroom rather than move into management as their career progresses
- The desire of some teachers to develop themselves as managers
- The need for managers, both academic and support, to undergo management development
- Those for whom the facilitation of learning is only a part of a broader role such as technician or librarian.

Following initial training, the first stage of a CPD framework could be required updating in areas covered by initial qualifications where knowledge and practice moves on, and acquisition of skills and knowledge for those who have changed roles or taken on additional roles. After this, the framework splits into two, providing development routes for those who wish to continue developing their teaching role either through specialisation, or as an 'expert' or 'superteacher'. The other arm of the structure is for those who wish to develop as managers. The two arms need not be exclusive: individuals can select development opportunities from either arm as best suits their own needs. The framework is reunited at the apex through the requirement for the training or qualification of principals. Figure 1 below represents this framework diagrammatically.

Figure 1. A framework for CPD



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4. The role of standards and qualifications

It is difficult to talk about any framework of CPD without considering the role of qualifications. In addition, where occupational standards exist it is appropriate to consider their role, both in terms of qualifications, and in setting expectations with regard to CPD functions.

Qualifications can play an important part in CPD where there are procedures for approving courses for this purpose. In the absence of any professional body in further education which requires members to remain in good standing through, for example, the accumulation of a set number of hours, points or credits, there is no clear or agreed set of qualifications which form a CPD portfolio. Custom and practice within the sector, however, have established qualifications such as advanced certificates and diplomas, MAs, MEds, and research degrees as CPD awards for teachers; and certificates and diplomas in management, NVQs in management, and MBAs, as CPD awards in management.

The role of standards, now that they exist, is in informing the development of qualifications and in setting expectations with regard to the design of CPD activities, and the construction of individual development plans. Standards can also play a part in assisting informal learning. As Eraut (1998) argues in relation to NVQs,

> [standards] *might help people draw together some of their informal learning, reflect on it and bring it more under the control of their self-evaluative capability.*

In some parts of the UK, for example in Northern Ireland and Scotland, the place of qualifications in initial training and CPD has been formalised to some extent, with a clear link between specific qualifications and the professional development of practitioners. With a consensus on a systematic framework for professional development in the rest of the UK, it should be easy to link qualifications to various elements of the framework, resulting in a clear ladder of qualifications or standards related activities to guide the professional development of FE staff.

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The publication of the White Paper, *Learning to succeed*, puts continuing professional development (CPD) of governors, principals, managers and teachers centre stage in the drive to improve standards within the FE sector and to ensure the best learning experience for students. This paper looks at the varying definitions of CPD, the link between personal and organisation development, and the role of standards and qualifications in the CPD framework.

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